



Elimination of the NCCAOM Pre-Graduation Route: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1. Why did the NCCAOM Eliminate the Pre-Graduation Route?

Answer: The Pre-Graduation Route is the only NCCAOM eligibility route that allows candidates who have not completed their education and/or training to sit for the NCCAOM exams. All other eligibility routes require graduation from an accredited, governmental, or an apprenticeship program. Elimination of this route will ensure that all examination candidates are equally prepared for their national-board certification exams.

Eliminating the Pre-Graduation Route will standardize the application process for all practitioners. All applicants for certification and testing will have successfully completed their formal education, both didactic and clinical experience, as well as their comprehensive exams before taking the NCCAOM exams. Only one transcript will need to be submitted to the NCCAOM, not two or more. Currently, Route 1b applicants must rely on their school to determine when is the appropriate time to send a *NCCAOM® Pre-Graduation Verification Form* and transcript for eligibility to test, and then the student must request a second transcript after they have graduated. Now students will only need to request a graduation transcript, which will save time and money.

Also, eliminating the Pre-Graduation Route may help practitioners prevent licensure issues in the future. The NCCAOM has observed that many Pre-Graduation Route practitioners do not complete the steps necessary to become an NCCAOM Diplomate if certification is not required in their state of practice. Years later, they may move to a different state where NCCAOM certification is required, or state regulations change that require NCCAOM certification. In these cases, the practitioners must often restart the certification process. Eliminating Pre-Graduation Route will help practitioners avoid this difficult situation by standardizing application requirements. Furthermore, all acupuncture state licensing boards require that all applicants must complete all formal education and/or apprenticeship training prior to submitting an application.

Finally, the NCCAOM is accredited by the [National Commission for Certifying Agencies \(NCCA\), an independent accrediting body for professional certification programs](#). The NCCA's Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs require that there be a rationale for all eligibility requirements. To ensure that all eligibility routes are defensible and adhere to NCCA Standards, the NCCAOM will



now require all applicants to have completed substantially equivalent training and/or education before becoming eligible to take the exams.

Q2. Why did the NCCAOM delay elimination of the pre-graduation route until November 1, 2018?

Answer: The NCCAOM heard your concerns and delayed the migration to the new online portal until November 1, 2018, which is a key factor in speeding-up application processing times which is necessary before eliminating Pre-Graduation Route. The NCCAOM created the new online portal for school officials in the U.S. to cut application processing wait times. School officials will be able to upload their graduates' final transcripts directly into the NCCAOM system. This will enable school officials to have direct control over application processing times for their students as the new procedure eliminates (1) the need for the school to print and stuff envelopes, (2) USPS mail time, (3) NCCAOM mail sorting, and (4) time for the NCCAOM Customer Relations team to input the transcript into the candidate profile. Similarly, the online portal will allow the CCAOM to upload CNT certificates as they are requested by applicants.

The new online system will automatically notify the NCCAOM's Customer Relations team when transcripts and CNT certificates have been received and applicants are ready to be approved to take the exams. Current average turnaround for test approval is typically four weeks from the date a school transcript is received by the NCCAOM. We anticipate the timeline for approved candidates to receive their Authorization to Test (ATT) letters will be reduced to one week. All ATT letters will be uploaded to the online portal immediately upon approval, and approved candidates will be able to access their ATT letters and schedule their exams with Pearson VUE upon receipt.

Q3. When the Pre-Graduation Route is eliminated, what happens to existing Pre-Graduation Route applications that are still in progress?

Answer: This policy change will not affect Pre-Graduation Route applications submitted prior to November 1, 2018. All open applications will be processed accordingly. New Pre-Graduation Route applications will no longer be accepted by the NCCAOM beginning November 1, 2018.

Q4. When can I apply for certification as a pre-graduate, and how long will you hold my application?

Answer: Any student in their final year of training who has met the pre-graduation requirements may apply for NCCAOM certification through Pre-Graduation Route



through October 31, 2018. In addition to being in their last year of training, students must have completed the following education requirements:

- Acupuncture Certification: 1,600 total hours, of which 410 hours must be clinical hours
- Oriental Medicine Certification: 2,500 total hours, of which 410 hours must be clinical hours

School officials have the final say in approving their students to sit for the NCCAOM examinations prior to graduation. Certification applications submitted under Pre-Graduation Route will be held for up to 60 days. The NCCAOM will return all applications and issue a refund to the applicant if a *NCCAOM® Pre-Graduation Verification Form* and a pre-graduation transcript are not received from the school within 60 days of receipt of the application.

Q5. Once the Pre-graduation route is eliminated, will students have to wait until they graduate to apply for NCCAOM certification?

Answer: All students applying through Route 1: Formal Education: United States Applicants, will be able to **submit their application to NCCAOM 60 days prior** to their graduation date. This will ensure that the school receives notification to upload the applicant's graduation transcript to the NCCAOM online portal. School officials will be able to upload the final transcript directly to an applicant's profile as soon as all required classes are completed, and the graduation date can be entered on the final graduation transcript.

Q6. Are there advantages to the elimination of Pre-Graduation Eligibility Route for school officials?

Answer: In addition to reducing school officials' processing time and costs by eliminating the need for a *Pre-Graduation Verification Form* and multiple transcripts, submission of only one final graduation transcript will ensure increased accuracy of the *NCCAOM School Program Performance Reports*.

The elimination of Pre-Graduation Eligibility Route will ensure students are on their graduating school's *NCCAOM School Program Performance Report*. Sometimes Route 1b applicants commence their education at one ACAOM-accredited program and then transfer to another accredited program, which can result in transcripts from multiple institutions. In these cases, the student's examination scores included in their original program's report, which inaccurately demonstrates a program's performance. Eliminating Pre-Graduation Eligibility Route and multiple transcripts will help ensure these important *NCCAOM School Program Performance Reports* are accurate.